

## Introduction

Mongolia is a country with an influence and attraction seemingly disproportionate to the size of its population. This is due to its unique history and strategic location between Russia and China, as well as its significant size and access to valuable natural resources. Research on modern Mongolia, especially related to its international role in political affairs, energy, ecology and security, has historically relied primarily on Mongolian and Russian scholars. Chinese and Western scholars have written sparingly of Mongolia until recently. However, since the move toward a democratic government in the early 1990s and its subsequent interest in international relations with the United States, Japan, Korea and European powers, Mongolia has gained the attention of a new generation of scholars, global businesses and governments. This collection of articles indicates the growing interest in Mongolian affairs and the affairs of its Northeast Asian neighbors.

This special collection is rooted in a conference held in November 2005 in Hawaii. Jointly sponsored by the Government of Mongolia's Academy of Management, the University of Hawai'i, the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, the Pacific Forum, and the East-West Center, this conference brought together speakers from Mongolia, the United States, Russia, Korea, China and Canada. Support from the American Embassy in Mongolia was also instrumental in assuring the success of the conference. The title of the conference was *Northeast Asia and Mongolia: Opportunities and Challenges*. Papers given at that time and published here have been revised by most presenters to take into account changes that have taken place in recent years, though in some cases the reader may find that certain issues still reflect the period in which the original ideas were presented.

In addition to the papers given at the conference, contributions by Dari Khongorzul and Ron Porter have been added to this special edition. These papers reflect a timely review of modern Mongolia and its place in the international arena. Of special note are the contributions of younger scholars who are now entering the field of modern Mongolian and Northeast Asian studies.

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